

City of Reading
2013 Charter Review Commission
October 9, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m. City Hall

The meeting of the 2013 Charter Review Commission was held on Wednesday, October 9, 2013 at St. Paul's Church, 1559 Perkiomen Ave., Reading, PA. The meeting was called to order at 6:45 p.m. by Vice Chairperson Anne Sheehan.

Members of the Commission present were: Anne Sheehan, David M. Cituk, John Slifko, Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz, Thomas Anewalt and Frank B. Denbowski.

Members not present were: Rosemary Frank-Vitale, Randy Corcoran, Carl E. Geffken, Vaughn D. Spencer and Michael H. Reese.

Also present was, Robert Jenks, Paul Janssen, Charter Review Commission Facilitator, Charles Younger and Carol R. Lewis, Recording Secretary.

Minutes - Motion by T. Anewalt second by J. Slifko and unanimously carried to accept the minutes of October 2, 2013 as presented.

Public Comments/Visitors – Robert Jenks, 1566 Haak, St Reading, Pa commented that he thought it was unfair that people who had been in their homes for 50 years or more were forced to sell their homes because they could not afford their taxes. Other people buy those homes and turn them into apartments which bring down the neighborhood and they pay the same amount in taxes. It was pointed out that the taxing authority falls under the Administration Code, not the Charter Review and he was encouraged to attend a City Council meeting. M. Goodman-Hinnershitz felt that the Commission should look at some sort of possible amendment to address this concern. The Commission discussed the fact that the County does the assessments and the City does collect a rental unit charge but at this time it takes 3-5 years to inspect every property.

Commission Member Discussion on Charter Issues for Consideration by the Members: It was discussed whether or not to wait until more members are present to start this discussion. The Board discussed possible ways to get the annotated copy of the Charter from the Charter Board. If parts of the Charter are deemed illegal it is noted by annotation. The Charter Board indicated that they had some of it done. P. Janssen will be writing them a letter and will include a request to provide the annotations they have complete and find out how much more needs to be done. The Commission would like this for ease of reading and clarification purposes. M. Goodman-Hinnershitz recommended that they not start discussions now but resolve the process for deciding on their recommendations. P. Janssen recommended that problems and solutions be submitted in writing. The Commission discussed how to prioritize their recommendations. They looked at what the previous Charter Review Board did. It was decided to categorize the input and then decide on the priorities. Also, decide which items are Charter Amendments and which are not. It was pointed out that not all of the input has been received yet, but the process could be started and then added to as it went along. Once the priorities were identified, the Commission did more research and solicited legal opinions. P. Janssen will take an initial look at it. It was agreed that goals should be accomplished every week as there will always be attendance issues.

A chart will be circulated showing meetings that people know they will not be able to make to try to minimize quorum issues.

Old Business:

Additional Survey Recipients: Additional recipients suggested were the Berks Community Foundation, Berks Bar Association and the 3 colleges in the city. It will also be sent out electronically to all the City Boards and Commissions. Any additional recipients should be written or e-mailed to P. Janssen.

Meeting Locations: The next meeting will be at St. Mark's Lutheran at 10th and Windsor Streets but it needs to be confirmed.

New Business – None to note.

Public Comment – R. Jenks asked how much power the Charter Review Commission has. He was advised that they are a recommending body only.

Motion by D. Cituk second by T. Anewalt and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol R. Lewis
Recording Secretary